

A Famine of Faith

Prayer

This morning I wonder if we know what the signs of famine are today? I am sure that we all know what famine is in the context of not having enough food produced by the crops for the people of a nation to eat...

What then could that crazy pastor be talking about?

I am talking about a famine of faith...

As we know we are in year of jubilee here at Crossroads. I praise God for his goodness. Soon we will need to be moving progressively forward. We will see growth in the church, we will see an expansion of ministry; there will be an increase in resources. We simply need to choose faith over fear.

Let's take a look at 2 Kings 6:24-7:5

Recently we have looked at this scripture passage about Ben Hadad's siege of Samaria. Today, I want to explore another aspect.

Let's start with 2 Kings 6:1-7 ESV

Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See, the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there." And he answered, "Go." Then one of them said, "Be pleased to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed." Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float. And he said, "Take it up." So he reached out his hand and took it

Whenever the church decides to expand in any way, either through spiritual growth, membership or even in facilities, the enemy brings stumbling blocks into our path.

I find it interesting in this passage that even the sons of the prophets, despite their station, are placing their hand to the task before them. These are leaders. Next in this passage we see that the tool he was using was a resource that was given by another. In fact, he borrowed the tool to do the job that was required. Next we see that he lost the tool as the axe head flew off into the water... Do you see that the man that lost the axe head was grieved, as he had lost what was given to him? He could not return the axe head...

Friends, the great message in this passage this morning is that the son was not alone... The Lord cares for his people in their smallest concerns. It is God's grace that can soften the hardest heart that is sunk in the mud of this world and raise it up. In faith he moved forward. He responded in obedience even though he did not see how it could help... and the iron axe head floated and God made a miracle happen. God honored their efforts and their obedience.

This week as I was praying about what is to come, God has shown me this... He cares about our efforts and as we move forward in obedience despite opposition he will create the miracle that we so desire here in Salmo.

Moving the kingdom of God forward is not for the feint of heart... Take a look at what happens in response to God's people moving with a progressive vision...

2 Kings 6:8

"Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, "My camp will be in such and such a place."

Take note here that the attack came in an organized fashion... But God told Elisha and Elisha told the King of Israel and Israel escaped...

Can't understate the value of communication with God at any time, but specifically we see how important it is here when his people are progressing.

Friends, he thought he has a leak in his ranks but he ultimately hears that it was Elisha the prophet that told the King of Israel... this totally ticked off the king of Syria... He set chariots, horses and men.

How often when we try to advance the kingdom in accordance with God's will does the enemy attempt to provide opposition?

Well... Back to Elisha

Elisha's servant saw and he was in distress and despair. We read in verse 15:

"When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

What did Elisha do?

He prayed...

Join me at verse 17

Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha

So what did God instruct about these enemies of his plan? Verse 18-23

And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, "Please strike this people with blindness." So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the Lord opened their eyes and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?" He answered, "You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel

So God had given them the victory and they gave kindness to their enemies. And... they held onto their progressive vision.

So did the enemy give up? NOPE. It says: "*And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel*"

Come with me to verse 24 of our text:

Afterward Ben-Hadad king of Syria mustered his entire army and went up and besieged Samaria

To be totally clear here... Besieging a city is different from an outright attack. When a city is besieged, it is encircled and all supplies and imports are cut off from the city. It stops imports and exports.

Now if we think of this in terms of our church what would this mean? It would mean that the enemy has tried to cut off our sustenance. No message of life flows out from the church and no life flows into the church. The church is in famine.

What we have seen so far is that the enemy tries to stop up Gods people when they try to move forward with a progressive vision. The word of God tells us that without a progressive vision the people dwell aimlessly. Some versions even say that the people perish and others say the people cast of restraint. The point is they loose sight of what they are called to do in obedience to his will.

Have you ever seen this kind of demonic tactic? What we see happening in Syria is what happens to a church that is under this kind of attack. We read that there was a great famine in the land.

Ever felt famine in your life when you tried to press forward with God and the enemy has put blockages in your way?

I have said it before... "It is what it is" is not the message. The message is: "Let's make it what it can be..."

What are some of the signs of spiritual famine?

- Intransigence, hardness of heart and stubbornness
- Going back to what was and living in the past, regardless of consequence
 - In verse 25 we read: *"And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver"*
 - The dung shows where the dove was and left behind, not where it is. It is nothing more than the excrement of what was. The dove is carrying itself forward into the present. The dove has left the dung behind but carried its essence forward.
 - We need to keep the essence of what was and embrace our roots, but we cannot live in the past, we must advance the kingdom.
- Backbiting and Devouring each other
 - Verse 26: *"Now as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, 'Help, my lord, O king!' And he said, 'If the Lord will not help you, how shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?' And the king asked her, 'What is your trouble?' She answered, 'This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow'"*
- Depressed leadership – especially pastors...
 - Verse 30: *"When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes—now he was passing by on the wall—and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body—"*
 - He became angry at God and by extension his messenger. He had lost faith and chose to respond to his fear. He felt helpless and so cursed God and ultimately died.
- Couple of final points to ponder here:

- If as the King said the barn floor was empty and the winepress was dry... There was no harvesting being done... they had been living off their past efforts.
- When a famine occurs... the women decided to eat their children. One backed out... What can we learn from this? In a famine, people will want YOU to do something drastic to get them out of it, but it is usually something they are not willing to do themselves...

Conclusion

We need to read and pray to equip ourselves for the onslaught of the enemy. We need to pursue knowledge and understanding of God and we need to communicate with him. We need to build faith and cast off fear.

If we are to move the kingdom of God forward, the enemy will not like it. For this reason we need to be diligent in creating a culture of honor. We need to increase our faith in what God is about to do and we need to prepare ourselves for the harvest.

The Lord will fill our barn and our winepress...

I leave you with this...

Ephesians 6:10-20

Put on The Whole Armor of God

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak

Prayer.